

Proposed rule changes promote clean water, good fishing, healthy farms

Largest 150 farms with permits, plus 10-15 more affected by federal changes



Wisconsinites all want prosperous farms, good fishing and clean water. Most of the state's very largest farms already take steps needed to prevent manure problems that can pollute Wisconsin waters; all very large farms would be required to take such steps under proposed changes to state manure management rules. Such precautions are especially important because these very large farms produce at least as much organic pollution as a city the size of Sun Prairie and spread it on farm fields, often without any treatment.



Proposed changes to the manure management rules in Chapter NR 243 of the Wis. Admin. Code are triggered by recent federal law changes. They were developed with an advisory committee and modified as a result of public input during public hearings in summer 2005.



The proposal would affect 150 of Wisconsin's 30,000 livestock farms, those already required to get a water quality protection permit. Called Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, or CAFOs, they have at least 1,000 animal units -- equal to 700 dairy cows, 1,000 cattle, 55,000 turkeys and 2,500 pigs. Up to 15 more farms could be affected as a result of federal changes.

These proposed changes are an important piece of addressing manure-related incidents that cause fish kills, contaminate wells, and pollute lakes, streams and groundwater. While such problems have involved farms of all sizes, getting the rule changes in place will help reduce manure problems involving very large farms and can help sustain public support for farming.

Major proposed changes for how largest farms manage manure would:

- Prohibit applying liquid manure on frozen or snow-covered ground unless it's injected or immediately incorporated into the soil or unless it's an emergency outside the operator's control. Solid manure spreading would be prohibited on frozen or snow-covered ground during February and March unless it's immediately incorporated.
- Require six months of liquid manure storage, with some exceptions. Up to 80 percent of DNR-permitted livestock producers already have, or plan to have, six months of storage for liquid manure. Illinois, Michigan, Ohio and Indiana already require at least this much storage.
- Require that manure spread on land be set back from private and public drinking water wells and from sinkholes and fractured bedrock. Additional restrictions would apply to manure and process wastewater spread on areas with shallow soils.
- Require farms to implement nutrient management plans based on applying the right amount of phosphorus, a nutrient, which if it enters lakes and rivers, decreases water quality and fuels algae growth.
- Require farms applying manure near lakes and streams to implement practices such as leaving crop residue on fields to protect against manure runoff.
- Require farms to develop an emergency response plan to address manure spills or discharges.

Visit the NR 243 Rule Revision website for more information:
<http://dnr.wi.gov/org/water/wm/nps/rules/nr243/nr243.htm>

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